

PRISON REFORM AND PRISON SUNDAY.

SIR,—In view of the fact that Sunday next the 20th inst., is Prison Sunday, and will probably be pretty generally observed as such by the clergy of this Province, we have thought the time opportune for calling attention to the Prison Reform Movement, inaugurated last spring by the Prisoners' Aid Association of Canada. The Association has memorialized the Ontario Government on the subject, and has asked for the appointment of a Commission of competent gentlemen to collect information regarding prisons, reformatories, houses of correction, workhouses, etc., with a view to the adoption of the most approved methods of dealing with the criminal classes. They are also suggesting to the Government the propriety of erecting sufficient prison and reformatory accommodation in the Province to completely relieve the gaols of criminals convicted of crime and under sentence. When the gaols are relieved of this class of prisoners there will then be room for classification and for the isolation of persons under custody and awaiting trial. The following resolutions have also been commended to the favorable consideration of the Government:

1. County gaols should be maintained only as places of detention for persons charged with offences and awaiting trial, and should not be used for prisoners after trial and conviction.
2. County gaols should be conducted strictly on the separate or cellular system.
3. Persons convicted of crime should not be detained in county gaols, but should be dealt with according to the age and natural propensities of the criminal.
4. A boy under fourteen years of age, not previously vicious, should be restored to his parents upon their giving a guarantee of his future good conduct. Failing this, he should be sent to an industrial school.
5. A boy under fourteen or sixteen years of age, having a natural tendency toward crime, or being convicted of a second offence, should be sent either to a Reformatory direct or to an Industrial School on trial, according to circumstances; and a special court should be organized to deal with these cases, as well as with females charged with light offences. A boy should never be brought to open police court nor sent to a county gaol.
6. Industrial Schools and Reformatories should not be considered as places for punishment, but should be utilized wholly for the reformation of character. The young persons sent to these institutions should not be committed for any definite period, but they should be detained until reformation is attained, irrespective of the time required. The officers of these institutions should be carefully selected, preferably by a system of examination and promotion, and without reference to party or social influence.
7. As industrial employment is a necessary step toward reformation, and as this cannot be supplied by the county gaols, the necessity arises for prisons and reformatories of ample dimensions, where such employment can be provided, and where other influences of a reformatory character may be utilized, and where a system of classification may be carried out.
8. The expense and maintenance of such persons in such institutions should be borne by the county from which they are sent, when such expense exceeds the proceeds of the industrial labor of the persons so sent.
9. Tramps and habitual drunkards should be sent to an institution where they can be provided with productive industrial employment, and where they can be brought under reformatory influences; and they should be detained in said institution under indeterminate sentences. Incurables should be sentenced to penitentiary for life. They should be considered as having forfeited all right to regain their liberty unless reformation takes place.
10. In order to meet the requirements of the case, there should be sufficient prison accommodation in Ontario to relieve the county gaols of all persons undergoing sentence. This accommodation should be provided either by enlarging the Central Prison or by erecting two additional prisons, one in the east and the other in the west. There should be unification in our prison system. The prisons should be graded, and the reformatory principle in its most improved form and after the best model should be incorporated with said system.
11. The question of prison labor should be removed from the arena of party politics, and members of labor organizations should look at this question from a patriotic rather than from a trades standpoint.

On examining the prison statistics for the Province of Ontario for the year ending September 30th, 1888, we were very much surprised to find that during that period there were actually 6,403 prisoners in our county gaols who spent the entire term of their imprisonment without classification and without proper industrial employment. In other words, these 6,403 prisoners spent the entire term of their imprisonment in idleness, and the young and the comparatively innocent were crowded into the same corridors with hardened wretches who had grown old in wickedness. In addition to this we find that there were about 4,000 persons committed to gaol who were either not convicted or were discharged for other reasons. Many of these were doubtless perfectly innocent and not members of the criminal class, but who, while awaiting trial, from lack of classification, were forced into association with the most degraded in the crowded corridors of the common gaols.

We believe the time has arrived when this monstrous evil should be remedied, and we appeal to the Christian community to join us in this Prison Reform Movement. We believe the only remedy is a radical one, namely, the establishing of sufficient prison and reformatory accommodation to completely relieve the gaols of all persons under sentence. This is well and tersely put by J. W. Langmuir, Esq., late Inspector

of Prisons, as follows, "The remedy is in a nutshell—a central prison in the east and a central prison in the west—both on the Elmira reformatory principle, and large enough to completely relieve the galls of all prisoners under sentence, just what I recommended to the Government years ago."

This Prison Reform platform has received the unqualified endorsement of judges, gaolers, prison experts and students of penology, both in Canada and the United States, and we have been tendered the hearty co-operation of nearly all the Church Courts of the Province.

It will be seen from the following letters that these proposed reforms have also received the hearty endorsement of some of the most eminent penologists in the United States.

From Joseph Nicholson, Superintendent Detroit House of Correction.

DEAR SIR,—An extraordinary demand upon my time, which I could not ignore, prevented an earlier reply. I heartily indorse the resolutions of your Prisoners' Aid Society, as the principles they enunciate are sound beyond honest question. The 7th and 9th cover a large field much in need of proper cultivation, and the 11th (regarding prison labor) proposes a remedy for an indelible evil fostered only for selfish purposes, now dying a merited death.

With my best wishes,
Yours sincerely,

JOSEPH NICHOLSON.

From Warden Brush, Sing Sing, New York.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of the 10th instant, with inclosure of your Prison Reform Platform, and hasten to reply.

I have read it over very carefully, and find many, many good things in it. I am clearly of the opinion that county jails should be maintained only as places of detention, and should not be used for prisoners after trial, except occasionally where there is no penitentiary near, for very short sentences.

There can be no reformation in prisons without productive labor.

Productive labor not only gives men habits of industry, but it hardens the muscles, and besides teaching them a trade prepares them thoroughly for earning their own living upon discharge.

Ready at any time to answer any questions you may desire,

I am, yours sincerely,

A. A. BRUSH,
Agent and Warden.

From Z. R. Brockway, Elmira Reformatory.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have yours of the 10th covering the circular and resolutions you have submitted to your people. The principles and practices they involve have my hearty approval. I believe they are sound principles of rational penology.

As to the imprisonment of convicted prisoners in the common jails, whether in Canada or the United States, it is an outrageous, not to say barbarous proceeding, and one of the most prolific sources producing crime. It should be discontinued, and I greatly hope you will be successful in securing an act of Parliament that will positively prohibit the imprisonment of any others in the common jails than such as are awaiting trial, and these to be kept upon the cellular system. You may be interested to know that following the successful prison law of last winter by which the most advanced principles of penology are introduced into the statutory enactments of the State of New York, is sure to come up this winter an act prohibiting the confinement of prisoners on final sentence in the common jails of this State, and the centralizing in the highest possible degree the administration of the prison system of New York.

With a feeling of gratification at the interest you manifest, and heartily approving the work you have undertaken, and with best wishes for a successful outcome of it, I am,

Most sincerely yours,

Z. R. BROCKWAY,
General Superintendent.

From General Brinkerhoff, of Ohio.

DR. A. M. ROSEBRUGH,—I have read with interest and pleasure the Prison Reform propositions of the Prisoners' Aid Association of Canada, and heartily approve them.

In addition to the erection of two new prisons—one in the east and one in the west—we would favor the establishment of a reformatory for young men, between the ages of 16 and 20. We would also be glad to see industrial schools, similar to the one at Mimico, established in different parts of the Province. With regard to the reformatory at Penetanguishene we would be glad to see it enlarged so as to admit of proper classification and practical industrial training, in accordance with the repeated recommendations of the officers of that institution.

On behalf of the Prisoners' Aid Association of Canada.

A. M. ROSEBRUGH, M.D.,
S. E. ROBERTS.

Our Ohio Board of Charities and Corrections, for many years past, have recommended similar propositions upon our State authorities, and to a large extent have secured legislative action, so that in the main they now have the sanction of law.

I am glad to know that public sentiment is coming up to them in Canada, and I trust you will persevere until their full adoption is secured.

Very sincerely yours,

R. BRINKERHOFF.

From W. M. F. Round, Secretary New York State Prisoners' Aid Association.

DEAR SIR,—Every true penologist and every true philanthropist must be with you in the movement you are making for Prison Reform.

The resolutions you send me are admirable. I fully concur with you that a "boy should never be brought to an open police court or sent to a county gaol." Either, sets an insurmountable mark on him; he is forever after less strong to resist evil. The county gaols are simply an abomination! Schools of crime in every sense. They have no place in any modern system of penal procedure. In but few cases is the any punitive effect; they are never reformatory. I wish I could help you more in your work, but you have the truth before you and believe in it, viz: No reduction of crime without reformation of criminals; no reformation of criminals without classification and systematic educative labor; no classification and systematic educative labor practicable without entire unification of your prison system.

Faithfully yours,

Wm. M. F. ROUND.

From Hon. Chas. Dudley Warner, of Hartford, Conn.

DEAR SIR,—I approve most cordially your plan of Prison Reform.

We must in some way stop the manufacture of a criminal class, in our inferior jails and lock-ups.

Institutional life always has its objections, and even in our best juvenile reformatories injury is done by herding together those of different degrees of depravity.

We want to be more active in every way in the preventing of crime—that is, in lessening the number of those liable to commit it.

Yet, with all our precautions there will be criminals and a criminal class. We never shall make any real progress—no matter how many model prisons we have—until we attack that class directly.

As soon as it is evident that a man belongs to it, that his intention is to live by preying upon society, he should be locked up and be forced to earn his living by labor. He should be incarcerated exactly as an insane person is shut up, until he is fit to have his liberty. If he can be reformed as all it will be by such a drill affecting the body, the intellect, and the morals as is given at Elmira, long enough continued to affect the whole nature by giving new habits.

The defect at Elmira is that the sentence is not indeterminate. Convicts can only be held there for the maximum time for which they could have been sentenced. There should be no limit any more than with the insane.

The incarceration of professional criminals is demanded by economy, and would be insisted on if the taxpayers understood the matter. It would do much to check the propagation of persons with criminal tendencies, and it is the only chance for the reformation of the confirmed criminal.

When the public understand that economy and philanthropy are at one in this, we should begin to make some progress.

Yours sincerely,

CHAS. DUDLEY WARNER.